

# **WOVEN BEAUTY**

## THE ART OF WEST AFRICAN TEXTILES

28.08.09 – 16.05.10

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The Museum der Kulturen holds a significant collection of West African textiles that was assembled systematically in the mid-1970s. On a 16-month journey from Lagos to Dakar funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, the curator of the Africa Department at that time, Renée Boser-Sarivaxévanis, and the present curator, Bernhard Gardi, collected roughly 1,000 textiles. Now, a generation later, and on the occasion of the 50th independence anniversary of many African nations, the Museum der Kulturen presents an exhibition showing a rich selection of classic, and now rare, textile artworks from Mali, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

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The new special exhibition at the Museum der Kulturen sets out from a 16-month research expedition through West Africa, from October 1973 to February 1975. The journey focused on textile craftsmanship and was undertaken by Renée Boser-Sarivaxévanis (1921 – 2004), at the time curator of the Africa Department at the Museum der Kulturen, and the present curator, Bernhard Gardi.

### **FROM MARKET TO MUSEUM**

In the course of the journey that commenced in Lagos and ended in Dakar they assembled a collection of approximately 1,000 textiles, thus laying the foundation of the present museum collection of West African textiles. About eighty percent of the textiles were purchased at public markets in towns and villages. Today, this would hardly be possible since woven cloths have increasingly been supplanted by printed fabrics.

### **MALI, NIGERIA, CÔTE D'IVOIRE & GHANA**

The focus of the exhibition is on customary textiles from Mali, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Each fabric, irrespective of whether it is made of cotton, wool or silk, or whether it was used as garment or blanket, constitutes a work of art in its own right. Although the textiles were never manufactured, or conceived of, as artworks in the Western sense of the term, they radiate a captivating expression of artistic beauty and skill.

### **TEXTILE BEAUTY AND SKILL**

On the occasion of the 50th independence anniversary of many African nations, the Museum der Kulturen pays tribute to the beauty and skill of West African textile art in a special exhibition. For its curator, Bernhard Gardi, who contributed decisively to the build-up of the Basel textile collection, the exhibition also marks a farewell event. The long-standing head of the Africa Department is retiring at the end of the year.

Media release and press photos are available online at [www.mkb.ch/raffiniert](http://www.mkb.ch/raffiniert)

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**FURTHER INFORMATION**

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**OPENING HOURS**

Duration: 28.08.09–16.05.10  
Tuesday–Sunday: 10:00–17:00 h  
Closed: 24./25. + 31.12.09 /  
01.01.10 / 22.–24.02.10  
Admission: CHF 7.– / 5.–

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**ACCOMPANYING PUBLICATION**

Bernhard Gardi: Woven Beauty –  
The Art of West African Textiles  
Christoph Merian Verlag / Museum der Kulturen  
Basel, 2009, 200 pages, 145 figures,  
soft cover with flaps, CHF 44.– / € 28.–

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**SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

The exhibition features a rich support programme including guided tours, lectures, podium discussions, stories about cloth, workshops and special offers for schools. For further details see the special exhibition programme or check at [www.mkb.ch](http://www.mkb.ch).

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**MUSEUM SHOP**

For the duration of the exhibition the shop at the Museum der Kulturen is offering a select choice of African articles.

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**ENTRANCE TO THE MUSEUM**

During the ongoing extension work at the Museum der Kulturen (2008–2010) the entrance to the museum is at Augustinergasse 8. The main entrance at Münsterplatz 20 is closed during this time.

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**(→Museum der Kulturen. Basel)**

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